The War Paper for Women

VOTES FOR WOMEN

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE UNITED SUFFRAGISTS.

VOL. IX. (Fourth Series) No. 426. APRIL, 1917. Price 1d. Monthly (Post Free 1½d.)

CONGRESS LIBRARY WASHINGTON D.C. 1917

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DEDICATION

To the brave women who to-day are fighting for freedom: to the noble women who all down the ages kept the flag flying and looked forward to this day without seeing it: to all women all over the world, of whatever race, or creed, or calling, whether they be with us or against us in this fight, we dedicate this paper.

THE OUTLOOK

"Backed by an overwhelming majority drawn from all quarters of the House of Commons, the Government are now pledged to bring forward a Reform Bill based on the Report of the Speaker's Committee." In these words the leading article in the *Times* summarises the great debate which took place in the House of Commons on March 28, on the motion put forward by Mr. Asquith to propose that legislation should promptly be introduced on the lines of the resolutions reported from the Speaker's Conference." The *Manchester Guardian* is equally emphatic. "Women, and not a few selected women, but women in their millions, will vote at the next election to be held in this country," it says: "that is a tremendous event." And every one who was present in the Lobby on the night of the Debate can testify to the apparently universal feeling among Members that the Government cannot fail to bring in a Reform Bill soon after Easter, and that by that Bill women will at last be enfranchised.

Will Women Be in the Bill?

This being the general opinion—and after the speeches of the Prime Minister, of the ex-Prime Minister, and of Mr. Walter Long and Mr. Bonar Law, it is indeed scarcely possible to challenge it—we regret all the more profoundly that Mr. Lloyd George, after declaring that it would be an "outrage" to leave women without a voice in reconstruction at the end of the war, went on to say—

> With regard to this the recommendations of Mr. Speaker's Conference are not quite in the same category as the other recommendations. For instance, they are not unanimous. In the second place, in one important respect they are indeterminate. That is the question of age. Here the Government propose to leave this question in so far as they have any authority or voice in the matter to be determined by the House of Commons. I have not the faintest doubt what the vote of the House of Commons will be.

This may be read in two ways. Those who heard the speech thought that the question of age alone was to be left to the House of Commons. The Press takes the view that the whole question of Woman Suffrage is to be left to the opinion of the House; and we confess that this is how we read the passage ourselves. While agreeing that the present House of Commons—still less the country—would not be likely to wish to leave women out of the Bill, we cannot help feeling that the Woman Suffrage proposals would be weakened in the eyes of the Lords if they had not been made an integral part of the measure from the first. For this reason alone—and there are others—we hope their inclusion as an integral part of the Government Bill will be strongly urged by the Suffrage Deputation that is to wait upon the Prime Minister after these lines go to press.

The Speeches

We wish we had space in which to quote some of the excellent speeches that were made during the debate. An interesting feature is that they were made in nearly evefy case by those who have recently become converts to Woman Suffrage. Mr. Asquith repudiated the notion that sentiment had anything to do with appreciation of women's war work as a reason for their enfranchisement. "It appeals to our feelings as well as our judgment," he said; and added—"what I confess moves me still more in this matter is the problem of reconstruction when the war is over." On the question of age, he said:

> That is pre-eminently a matter for adjustment and compromise, and I feel confident the proposal will not be allowed to founder on that rock.

We understand that the Suffrage Deputation already referred to (which has the support of all the Suffrage Societies, including the United Suffragists) will press upon the Prime Minister the advisability of widening the franchise proposals for women as much as can be done without detriment to the passage of the Bill.

Women's National Service

If praises were votes, all women would be enfranchised by this time. At the Colonial Institute, on March 26, Mr. Kellaway, M.P. (Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Munitions), said that, but for the work the women had done in the munition shops, the Germans would by now have won the war. At the mass meeting of women in the Albert Hall, on March 17, Lord Derby said the time had now come when it was only by additional labour, *and that women's labour*, that industries in this country could be continued. On the same occasion, a message was read from Sir Edward Carson, in which, after mentioning the thousands of women now employed in the shipyards and dockyards, he said:—

> I could not easily overstate their devotion to their work. Their physical endurance is, in my opinion, beyond the expectation even of those who rightly understand the spirit which inspires them.

In similar terms, Dean Welldon spoke in a recent letter to the *Times* of "the qualities exhibited by women in the war—their courage, their ability, their constancy, their patriotism, and their self-sacrifice." Without prejudice, we may say we have always thought that women, in common with men, possessed these human qualities, even in time of peace.

Items of Interest

Suffragists in the House of Lords have been reinforced by the Bishop of Lincoln, who took his seat there on March 14 in succession to the late Bishop of Exeter.

A memorial is being signed by influential women, praying the Government to grant facilities in the House of Commons for the passage of the Solicitors (Qualification of Women) Bill, which has passed the House of Lords without a division.

Of the 1,252 medical students who will qualify as doctors this year, only 164, or 13 per cent., are women. In 1921, when the 2,123 present first-year students may be expected to qualify, 674, or 33 per cent., will be women.

Seven hundred thousand women are now employed in the engineering workshops, of whom large numbers are engaged in highly technical work, though they knew nothing about engineering 18 months ago.

At the annual meeting of the Women's Legion, it was stated that two of the sections of its work, military cooking and motor transport, had been taken over by the War Office.

There is patriotism and patriotism. A farmer recently wrote as follows to the Women's Defence Relief Corps:—

> A near neighbour had four ladies give their services and found themselves and furnished their own apartments. Do you know any of those sort? *That is what I call real patriotism.* (The italics are ours.)

On the eve of the Electoral Reform debate, the following resolution was passed by a mass meeting in the Central Hall, Westminster, organised by the Women's International League:—

> That this meeting, encouraged by Russia's Great Charter of Freedom, heartily supports Mr. Asquith's resolution calling for a Reform Bill on the general lines of the Speaker's Conference, and urges the inclusion of women on the widest possible basis.

A great meeting will be held in the Albert Hall on Saturday, March 31, at 7 p.m., to congratulate "Free Russia," and to call for women's enfranchisement in this country.

After we go to press, a deputation of women munition workers, headed by Miss Mary Macarthur and others, will wait upon the Minister of Munitions to ask for a rise of 2d. an hour in women's trades, and 5s. a week where they are working in men's trades. Increases, not shared by the women, have already been granted to the men and boys engaged in engineering trades.

We draw the attention of readers especially to the article on page 253 of this issue, "Suffrage Victories During the War," which shows that other countries consider this the time to grant freedom to women; also to Miss Alison Neilans' notes on the progress of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill (page 250), and to our leading article on page 252, by Henry W. Nevinson, whose experiences in the Moscow Revolution of 1905 make him an interesting commentator on the lesson to be drawn by Great Britain from the present situation in Russia.

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL IN COMMITTEE

By Alison Neilans

(Secretary of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene).

We certainly cannot now complain that the C.L.A. Bill is being rushed through the House. It was sent to Standing Committee A on February 27, and that Committee is not yet through the clauses. Readers of VOTES FOR WOMEN, who have been unable to follow the Committee stages, will want to know where we stand now in regard to the Bill. Perhaps the following notes may make that clear.

Clause 1 (which raises the age at which a girl can consent to acts of indecency from 13 to 16 years) has been postponed. It is not likely it will be dropped altogether, and it is probable the whole question of the protection of boys will be raised on this clause. In my opinion amendments to make protection equal for both sexes should receive the support of all suffragists. It may not be easy to administer such a law, but it sets the right standard. Legal protection from seduction for all boys and girls up to sixteen or seventeen years is not only just and equal; it also gives a public stamp to the fact that a boy's chastity is as important as a girl's.*

Clause 2:—This is one of the clauses opposed by practically the whole woman's movement; but I regret to say it has not been entirely deleted. The Home Secretary very properly yielded to the strong opposition to subsection 3 (which gave power to magistrates to order a compulsory medical examination of certain prisoners). He said "it would not be wise to press in war time such a proposal when strong opposition was offered." Several of those who were present got the impression that this subsection was withdrawn for the moment, but that something of the sort may be inserted elsewhere if we are not very vigilant.

After the medical examination section had been withdrawn, the battle raged round subsection 4. This sub-section rested on sub-section 3, and provided that persons who had received a written notice, while under compulsory detention, that they were diseased would be liable to two years' imprisonment if convicted of certain specified offences within three months from the receipt of the written notice. Several amendments were put forward and negatived; and, ultimately, this sub-section also was withdrawn. Clause 2 as amended now stands as follows (the amendments made in Committee are in italics):—

(1) A person who is suffering from venereal disease in a communicable form shall not have sexual intercourse with any other person, *or wilfully communicate such disease in any other manner to any person*, or solicit or invite any other person to have such sexual intercourse *with him or her*.

(2) If any person acts in contravention of this section, that person shall be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment with or without hard labour for a term not exceeding two years or on summary conviction to imprisonment with or without hard labour for a term not exceeding six months:

Provided that a person shall not be convicted under this section if that person proves that he or she had reasonable grounds to believe that he or she was free from venereal disease *in a communicable form* at the time the alleged offence was committed, and

No person shall be convicted of any offence under this section upon the evidence of one witness, unless such witness be corroborated in some material particular by evidence implicating the accused.

(3 An offence under this section shall be deemed to be an offence to which Section twenty-nine of the Larceny Act, 1916 (which relates to demanding of money, &c., with menaces) applies.

The deletion of sub-sections 3 and 4 is undoubtedly due to the pressure which has been brought to bear on the Home Secretary and the Members. This was admitted in Committee, and we may congratulate ourselves that the reasoned arguments put forward against Clause 2, together with the opposition of the Medical Women's Associations, had considerable weight. To have gained a complete victory it would have been necessary to obtain the deletion of the words "or solicit or invite" in subsection 1 as above. The fact that these words remain still constitutes a real danger, and I have little doubt that, even as amended, the clause will certainly be put into operation almost entirely against women alleged to be prostitutes, and render them liable to two years' imprisonment. In the case of such women the safeguard as to corroboration of evidence is not likely to mean much. We have seen in the papers lately several instances where the prison doctor has handed in a statement as to the health of the woman charged with importuning; and the magistrate has, in open court, commented upon the fact that she was venereally diseased. It is doubtful if the prison doctor has any right to put in a medical statement before conviction concerning a prisoner, when it is not relevant to the charge; but it is quite certain that the magistrate has no right to make that statement public. It is a confidential communication, and should be treated as such.

Under Clause 2 subsection 1 (see above) the prison doctor's evidence will be relevant to the charge and his medical statement may be considered the necessary "corroborative evidence." If the woman were a private patient it would be against all medical honour for a doctor to give evidence against a person who has come temporarily into his or her charge, and I see no reason why prisoners should be on any different footing.

Clause 3:—This clause is perhaps the most satisfactory one in the Bill. It abolishes "reasonable cause to believe" as a defence in cases of criminal assault and extends the time in which a prosecution can be taken from six months to twelve.

Clause 4 has been dropped, and this will be regretted by a good many social workers. Its effect would have been to make landlords liable if any of their rooms were used "for the purposes of habitual prostitution," whereas at present they are only liable if their premises are used as "brothels." This is a technical definition and does not cover the case of one woman using the room for habitual prostitution.

If we really believe prostitution can be suppressed by law; if those laws were equal for both sexes; and if there were a legal definition of what constitutes prostitution it might conceivably be a good thing not to allow any rooms, private or otherwise, to be used for such purposes. As things are, I must say that, speaking for myself only, I am not sorry Clause 4 has gone by the board.

Clause 5 increases the penalties for brothel-keepers, and the effectiveness of this law will depend entirely upon its administration. One may go further and say it will depend entirely upon public opinion. If men want brothels it will always be worth the while of some people to provide them and take the risks.

Clause 6:—This was the other clause which was fiercely opposed. It increased the penalties on a second conviction for solicitation or "any such offence"—whatever that may mean! It specially referred to sections of two Acts which do not deal with "persons" but only with "common prostitutes and nightwalkers" who loiter or importune. As such it extended a thoroughly bad principle, and I think every person who believes in justice will rejoice to know it was defeated on a vote. The voting against was 16 to 15, and the danger of such a close victory is that this clause may re-appear during the Report stage in the House. We must not tolerate it. All these laws relating to "common prostitutes" are based on the fundamentally rotten idea that women who live immorally form a class who ought to be subjected to special legislation and special penalties, which do not apply to ordinary people, whether moral or immoral.

The work which Mrs. Butler and her colleagues began and carried so far is not completed until every law which penalises prostitutes as such is swept off the Statute Book. We cannot in justice recognize any such person as "a common prostitute." There are immoral men and immoral women; there are men who exploit the youth and inexperience of women, and women who do the same with men. In so far as they corrupt children or interfere with other people by public indecency or molestation, both men and women can be dealt with by the ordinary law to which all people are amenable. If an action is an offence it is an offence in all persons and not only in "prostitutes."

Clause 7:—This clause extends the Indecent Advertisements Act 1889 to newspaper advertisements, and aims at suppressing those which deal with drugs and appliances for sexual diseases and infirmities. An amendment was moved to include advertisements of mechanical methods for preventing conception, but this was negatived.

Clauses 8 to 11 have not yet been considered in committee.

* Since these words were written, the Standing Committee has again considered Clause 1, and agreed to substitute for it the following form of words: "(1) It shall be no defence to a charge or indictment for an indecent assault on a young person under the age of 16 that he or she consented to the act of indecency. (2) The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1880, is hereby revealed." [Editor VOTES FOR WOMEN.]

MRS. HARLEY

All Suffragists will have heard with deep regret the news of Mrs. Harley's death from an enemy bomb dropped at Monastir, on March 7. Sister of Mrs. Despard and of Lord French, she was indeed what the *Manchester Guardian* rightly describes as "a very gallant gentlewoman." She went out early in the War to establish one of the first of the admirable Scottish Women's Hospitals at the old Abbey of Royaumont, within sound of the German guns; and both here, and afterwards at Troyes in a stationary hospital, she worked under the direction of the French army authorities. Last year this hospital moved to Salonika, where Mrs. Harley, in charge of an ambulance column, gathered up the wounded after each engagement and conveyed them to hospital, being frequently under fire. A month or two before she was killed she left the Scottish Women's Hospital and went off to do refugee work under the Serbian Minister of the Interior. By the kindness of the Women's Freedom League we are able to publish the following extract from a letter written by Miss Nina Boyle on February 16, from where she is serving with the Wounded Allies Hospital Unit in Serbia:—

I have seen Mrs. Harley several times—she came here hot-foot when she heard of my arrival to get news of Mrs. Despard. She has now gone up to Monastir with her daughter for relief work—most intrepid and more than useful. She stayed the night with us on her way up, and started off in a dreadful snowstorm, as unmoved by those sorts of conditions as Mrs. Despard herself! She was seen close to her destination that evening by a man who called here next day, so our anxiety about her journey was relieved. She looks in the pink of condition. . . . . .

Last year Mrs. Harley was decorated by General Sarrail with the Croix de Guerre. She was buried near Salonika on March 10 with full military honours, attended by a Serbian guard of honour, and followed to the grave by Prince George of Serbia, General Milne, Lord Granville, Admiral Troubridge, and many other distinguished members of the army and the Diplomatic service. Suffragists will long remember her as a brave and unselfish woman, and as one who worked for many years in the greatest cause of all—that of women's freedom. On behalf of our readers we send our warmest sympathy and admiration to her sister, and our colleague in the movement, Mrs. Despard.

IRISH WOMEN AND THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE

(From an Irish Correspondent.)

A public meeting, representing seven Suffrage Societies, was held in the Mansion House, Dublin, on March 14th, to press that the claims of Irish women be considered by the Imperial Conference. There was a large attendance, and the following societies were represented on the platform:—

Irish Catholic Women's Suffrage Association, Irishwomen's Reform League, Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation, Conservative and Unionist Suffrage Association, Belfast Suffrage Society, Munster Franchise League, Irishwomen's Franchise League, Church League for Women's Suffrage.

Mrs. Stephen Gwynn, who was in the Chair, said that every shade of political opinion was represented on the platform, and all agreed on the one point—that women should be given a voice in the government of the country. The Imperial Conference would represent countries where women voted, and it would be an intolerable injustice that Australian and Canadian women should have a share in the settlement of Irish affairs, and Irishwomen be excluded. The following resolution was proposed by Mrs de Burgh Daly (Church League), and seconded by Mrs. Kingston (Federation):—

That in the event of the Irish question being considered at the Imperial Conference, the unanswerable claim of Irishwomen to the franchise should form an integral part of any settlement to which the Conference gives its support; and in the event of a Government measure being introduced to enfranchise the women of Great Britain, we demand equality of treatment for the women of Ireland.

Mrs. Connery, Miss Perry, Miss Mellone, and Miss Mary Hayden spoke in support of the resolution, which was carried by acclamation. A copy of it was sent to each member of the Imperial Conference, to every Irish member, and to the Prime Minister.

RUSSIA AND WOMEN'S VOTES

At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Council for Adult Suffrage the following resolution was passed:—

That the National Council for Adult Suffrage rejoices greatly at the resolve of the Provisional Executive Committee of the Duma to establish Universal Suffrage for the election of the Constituent Assembly, and hopes that the British Imperial Parliament will speedily follow the example of our great Ally, enfranchising all adult men and women.

LABOUR AND ELECTORAL REFORM

At the Labour Party Conference, held in London on March 20, consisting of representatives of the Trade Union Congress, the National Labour Party, the Parliamentary Labour Party, and women's industrial organizations, the following resolution was carried unanimously:—

That this conference, representing the political organisations of the working class, both men and women, while adhering to its repeated demands for complete adult suffrage and such other reforms in registration and constituencies as will make elections clearly representative of the popular will, welcomes the efforts made by the Speaker's Conference to arrive at an agreement upon these questions; it is of opinion that the Parliamentary Labour Party should support as a minimum the resolution of the Speaker's Conference, provided that the enfranchisement of women, including women wage-earners and widows, is agreed to, and calls for immediate legislation on the general lines of the report so that a decision of a truly rational character may be given at the forthcoming general election. This conference further requests the Parliamentary Labour Party to endeavour to secure the inclusion of women on the broadest possible basis, and especially to ensure that the bulk of the wage-earning women are not excluded from any franchise measure.

An amendment, calling for women's enfranchisement "on the same basis as men," was moved by Mr. Robert Smillie on behalf of the miners, and was lost, 981,000 voting for it, and 1,562,000 against. Another amendment, moved on behalf of the Cardiff Trades and Labour Council, calling for a Franchise Bill "based on complete adult suffrage," was also lost by 2,662,000 votes (against) to 88,000 (for).

Deputation to the Prime Minister

On the following day, March 21, the Prime Minister received a deputation from the Labour Conference, and Mr. Wardle, M.P., and Mr. Clynes, M.P., submitted the resolution that had been passed on electoral reform.

Mr. Lloyd George, as reported in the *Manchester Guardian*, told the deputation that action on the Speaker's Report rested with the House of Commons. There would have to be a general agreement, he said, as a condition of legislation.

LIBERALS AND THE SPEAKER'S REPORT

On March 7, Liberal M.P.'s met in the House of Commons to consider the Speaker's Report, and the following resolution was passed:—

That this meeting of Liberal members, recognising that the recommendations of the Speaker's Conference on Electoral Reform are a compromise between different views, trusts that the Government will promptly introduce a bill founded on these recommendations, and promises general support to such a measure.

LORD LYTTON'S LETTER

The following letter from Lord Lytton appeared in the *Times* on March 12:—

Mr. Asquith's suggestion that the Irish settlement should be referred to a conference of representatives of the Empire is apparently receiving widespread support, and those who hope by this means to find a solution for a hitherto insoluble problem are arguing that the Speaker's Conference on Electoral Reform was so ably conducted and has done such valuable work that it should be taken as a model for the Irish Conference. This no doubt is true. The Report of the Speaker's Conference represents a great deal of hard work and detailed study of the various problems involved. But of what use is the most diligent conference or the most brilliant report if its practical proposals are to have no result in legislation, if its recommendations are to be stultified by the prejudices of a few irreconcilable partisans? The Speaker's Conference came into existence in order to make proposals for an agreed measure, which, of course, means a compromise—but a compromise justifiable only as the basis of immediate action. Let those who put their faith in conferences, either for Ireland or for the Empire, clearly recognize this; otherwise resort to a conference becomes a device not for hastening but for hindering action, and the hopeful practice of inter-party discussions and recommendations is discredited. It is not only electoral reform which hangs upon the fate of the Speaker's Report.

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor of VOTES FOR WOMEN.

Madam,—Owing to the kindness of editors we were last year enabled to put many hundreds of women on the land. We send a Visiting Organizer to inspect the accommodation and we insist on a living wage. We have found that certain farmers are trying to exploit the patriotism of women, by asking them to work for nothing. This will keep wages down, and we are anxious that people should not encourage farmers in this reprehensible practice. Nobody going with our parties is allowed to accept unpaid work. We should be grateful if you would make this known to your readers. Also, anybody willing to work on the land should write, enclosing stamped addressed envelope, to Miss Myers, Organizer, 10, Abbey Road, London, N.W. 8.—Yours &c,

C. A. DAWSON SCOTT.
Women's Defence Relief Corps.

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Remember that "Votes for Women" appears on the last Thursday in every month, and order it in plenty of time.

We have weathered so many storms in the past that we do not mean to be beaten even by the new war regulation. You, our readers, who have stood by us so long, will surely not desert us now. With the utmost confidence, we appeal to you to make this fresh effort on behalf of our Paper and our Cause.

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Subscriptions to the paper should be sent to The Publisher, VOTES FOR WOMEN, 27, Chancery Lane, W.C.

The terms are (while a monthly issue), post free, 2s annual subscription, 1s. for six months, inside the United Kingdom; 2s. ($\frac{1}{2}$dol.) and 1s. (25 cents) abroad, payable in advance.

VOTES FOR WOMEN

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APRIL, 1917.

SHALL GREAT BRITAIN LAG BEHIND?

The astonishing Revolution in Russia has inspired the whole world with new and glorious hope. It has been hailed with joy by all who have retained the passion for liberty in spite of the encroachments from which liberty has lately suffered in our own and other lands. With inexpressible relief, we have witnessed the overthrow of a gloomy despotism which for generations has thrown a shadow of bloodshed and oppression over a vast surface of the world, and over a singularly intelligent and sympathetic people. We extend our heartfelt congratulation to the oppressed and starving working classes of Russia; we congratulate equally the Army, which refused to endure the corruption and incompetence of officials who fattened on contractors' profits, while they sent thousands of the young to die of violence or neglect. And we congratulate also the leading spirits of the Duma, who, taking their lives in their hands, just like the workpeople and the soldiers, had the courage to expose and destroy the malignant treachery of those "dark forces in high places," whose first thought in the war was the preservation of their dynasty and its despotic power. The whole world breathes more freely for Russia's relief from the wrong of centuries. The burden of the war feels lighter; its conclusion appears nearer and more assured of future peace. Above all, so far as this country is concerned, we can rejoice in the knowledge that a true democracy now stands on our side, and that we have no longer to regret or to apologise for an alliance with the tyranny whose very existence falsified the objects set before us at the outset of the present appalling contest.

A Chorus of Democratic Approval

We do not overstate the case. Our view is supported by leading and representative politicians of all British parties. In his separate message to the Russian Premier, our own Prime Minister declared that

> The Revolution, whereby the Russian people have based their destinies on the true foundation of freedom, is the greatest service which they have yet made to the cause for which the Allied peoples have been fighting since August, 1914.

"This war," he continued, "is a struggle for popular government as well as for liberty," and he described the principle of liberty as "the only sure safeguard of peace and the world." Similarly, in the House of Commons on March 19, Mr. Lloyd George declared that the events of the Revolution "mark an epoch in the world and the first great triumph of the principle for which we entered the war," observing besides that "free people are the best defenders of their own honour and safety." On March 22, Mr. Bonar Law, in moving a resolution that the House should convey to the Duma its fraternal greetings, and to the Russian people its congratulations upon the establishment among them of free institutions, said:

> We cannot but rejoice in the hope that in the final stages of this world conflict, all the Allied Powers will be under the direction of Governments which represent their people.

Mr. Asquith, in the same debate, was even more emphatic. As expressing the very principle of our cause, his actual words may be quoted at greater length. "The form of Russia's future government," he said:

> is to be submitted, as we are glad to know, to the free judgment of an enfranchised people. Whatever their ultimate decision may be, at this moment, by that very fact, Russia takes her place by the side of the great democracies of the world. . . . There is no lesson which history teaches more clearly than that freedom is justified of her children. Power and responsibility go hand in hand. The wider you make the basis of your power the more you infuse and stimulate the sense of responsibility.

Mr. Asquith further noticed with admiration that the enormous change had been carried out at a time when Russia was under the strain and stress of the greatest war in history. Following Mr. Asquith, Mr. Devlin said the Irish regarded the Russian Revolution as a message of hope to all oppressed people and all freedom-loving nations. And, finally, speaking of the recent Labour Conference, Mr. Wardle observed that

> Although we were met to consider the conference over which you (the Speaker) presided, our first thought was Russia and the Revolution which had taken place there; and although we were considering in regard to this country some kind of franchise which should take the place of the present franchise, yet universal suffrage was the message that we heard, and it was rather difficult to persuade our people to take anything less.

But—the Application?

We admire these sentiments. We agree with these principles. We echo these praises. We only ask whether, in the mouths of the politicians, the sentiments, principles, and praises are all cant, or whether they have any real sincerity. We do not see why all this fine talk about democracy, responsibility, and the struggle for freedom should be applied only to Russia. Do politicians talk like this only because Russia lies at a safe and comfortable distance? Do they believe in liberty only as far away as Moscow is? By the time these lines appear the debate on Wednesday, March 28 (on which we comment in our Outlook) will have put their good faith to the test. Whether they maintain that faith, or whether they betray it, we can assure the governors who are supposed to represent us that British men and British women are every bit as well qualified for democracy as are the Russian men and women over whose emancipation they wax so eloquent. We—all of us here in England and not in Petrograd or Siberia—we also wish to base our destinies upon the true foundation of freedom. We believe that for us, as well as for other nations, the war is a struggle for popular government, and that the principle of liberty is the only sure safeguard of peace and the world. We also venture to rejoice in the hope that in the final stages of this world conflict all the Allied Powers will be under the direction of Governments which represent their peoples—a position far enough removed from this country's now. We also should like our future Government to be submitted to the free judgment of an enfranchised people. We also believe that freedom is justified of her children, that power and responsibility go hand in hand, and that the wider you make the basis of your power the more you infuse and stimulate the sense of responsibility.

M. Miliukoff, now Foreign Minister in Russia, has told Mr. Harold Williams, the excellent correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, that under the "universal suffrage" which is to elect the Constituent Assembly, every man and every woman is to have a vote, as indeed the phrase implies. Is it not shameful that Russians should be thought worthy of such trust, and here in England our eloquent panegyrists of freedom and democracy are boggling over the proposals of the Speaker's Conference (so timid where women are mentioned!) and telling us, only too plausibly, that if we ask for any extension beyond those proposals, we shall wreck the chance of a Bill and get nothing at all? Would that this very month of April we might see the prophecy of *The Nation* fulfilled:

> A Russia which inscribes "universal suffrage" on the scroll of her new Constitution also writes "finis" on the England which haggles over a reform of her own limited franchise!

Other Shameful Contrasts

The Imperial War Conference and the Imperial War Cabinet are meeting in London now. Of the Dominions there represented (or entitled to representation) Australia and New Zealand have enjoyed Woman Suffrage for many years, and in Canada the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario have won it during the course of the war, while Nova Scotia's victory is announced even while we write. We all admire the free and energetic peoples of our Colonies and Dominions; but, admiring them as we do, we can hardly suppose that the women among them are endowed with some special faculty which entitles them to the franchise and is denied to their kindred women in this country. It used to be said that Australian and New Zealand women might vote without danger to the State because those countries had no foreign or Imperial politics. It was a ludicrous argument at any time, but not even the most stiff-necked and starchy old "Anti" would venture to advance it now, in view of the present Conferences and the decisions they must take.

Even the Arabs!

Another absurd contrast occurs to us. Soon after entering Bagdad, General Maude issued a proclamation to the inhabitants of that city, inviting them to elect representatives to a conference with the British political representatives as to local affairs and the future union of the Arab race. Is it to be supposed that some millions of British men and all the British women are less capable of having a voice in the direction of this country's interests than the Arabs of Bagdad?

Let us either boldly abolish these absurdities, as we trust the House of Commons will have decided to do by the time these lines appear, or else cease to talk or to listen to the cant about our "Mother of Parliaments," our broad-based responsibility, and destinies built on the true foundation of freedom. Rather than accept such humbug with complacency, let us mournfully agree that our country has been left behind in the contest for liberty, and that, unless her ancient love for self-government revives, she must subside into the bureaucratic tyranny from which Russia has now so joyfully emerged.

Henry W. Nevinson.

SUFFRAGE VICTORIES DURING THE WAR

By Mary Sheepshanks

(Hon. Secretary of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance.)

At the outbreak of war many suffragists felt something approaching despair. It seemed inevitable that their emancipation would be still further delayed and postponed, and that no progress would be made and no propaganda carried on in face of the calamity that had fallen upon Europe. Nevertheless, the last two years have shown greater gains for the cause than any previous two years in the history of the movement.

The United States

To begin with the neutrals, the United States has now a suffrage movement of such force and extent that nothing can hinder the speedy enfranchisement of all its women. In the autumn of 1914 the two States of Nevada and Montana voted on a referendum for full equal suffrage, thus making twelve suffrage States and one territory (Alaska)—amounting to one-half the area of the United States in which women enjoy full citizen rights.

The year 1915 saw one of the most intense campaigns that any country has ever seen—that of the women in four important Eastern states, New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New Jersey. They did not succeed; the liquor interest, corrupt politics, and the ignorant immigrant vote were temporarily too strong; but the fact that the women polled a million votes showed an unprecedented advance, and it was said that no cause could fail to win that had won a million men to support it. The immense and growing power of women was shown by the official adoption of woman suffrage in the programme of every one of the great political parties in 1916. This conversion was ascribed by well-informed and influential newspapers to the fact that women now voted in twelve States, which cast 91 out of 531 electoral votes in the Presidential election.

The autumn of 1916 brought still further evidence of the power wielded by American women voters. The Presidential election was singularly momentous and closely contested. The personality and policy of President Wilson and the International issues that hung thereupon drew the eyes of the whole world; in distant and backward Austria—where women may not even belong to political associations—people speculated as to the probabilities of the women's vote and its effect on war and peace. American politicians proclaimed that the women of the West decided the election, and henceforward the anomaly of a nation of which some women are free and some excluded from political rights is doomed.

Voting for the President

The great difficulties experienced by the women in gaining the vote in State by State; the insuperable obstacles of some State constitutions; the hardships of the referendum, which involves appeals to each individual, including millions of illiterate immigrants; the tactics of the liquor interests, who can focus their funds on each State in turn where a referendum is pending, have induced women to try other methods. These are, briefly—(1) The Federal amendment to the U.S. Constitution (by a similar amendment negroes were enfranchised); (2) Presidential suffrage, which can be voted by a State Legislature without a referendum.

This second method gave the Presidential vote to Illinois women in 1913, and in 1917 has been brilliantly successful. It has gained the three States of North Dakota, Indiana, and Ohio; and women now vote for the President in fifteen States, which cast 135 electoral votes out of 531. The gain in Ohio is particularly important, as it is one of the densely populated, industrial States of the East, adjacent to Pennsylvania and New York. Similar Bills are being introduced into other Legislatures, and are likely to pass in the near future.

Another striking success for women is the election of Miss Rankin, of Montana, to the United States Congress. This is the first time that a woman has taken her seat in the sovereign Parliament of a great Power. Eleven women have seats in State Legislatures.

In Canada.

Across the border in Canada we find a people deeply engaged in war, and yet so alive to women's claims that within the last fourteen months five great Provinces, extending from the Great Lakes to the Pacific, have enfranchised women. Early in 1916 Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan made suffrage equal and universal, and gave women eligibility as members of Parliament. British Columbia adopted woman suffrage in the autumn of 1916, and Ontario in February, 1917. In Nova Scotia the Bill giving full suffrage to women and the right to practise the law, passed its second reading unanimously on March 22. At present, women have not the vote in Canada for the Dominion Parliament, but that cannot long be withheld. In the case of Ontario, one of the older colonies—more industrial, further East, and more conservative than the Western prairie States—the vote was granted to women very largely as a result of their patriotic services during the war, which, as in this country, have opened the eyes of many men to the value of women's work to the community.

In Mexico

Before closing the story of successes on the American continent, we must briefly mention the sudden emergence of a women's movement in Yucatan, Mexico, the first Spanish-speaking country to develop feminism. Two women's Congresses have been held, at which programmes of social and educational reform have been adopted; and the American Press reports that the new Constitution enfranchises independent women-workers.

In Europe

Turning now to Europe, we find great progress in Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Holland. In Russia we hear that women are to vote with men in the election of the Constituent Assembly; and from this real universal suffrage will probably follow. Denmark enfranchised its women in June, 1915, as did Iceland, with an age limit which is to be lowered at each registration. In both countries women are eligible as members of Parliament. The amendment to the Constitution embodying these reforms was suspended on the outbreak of war, then taken up again by a compromise between the parties, in order, as was said, *to strengthen the country in these dangerous times by uniting men and women as citizens, able with all their powers to serve their country.* Danish women have so far not had an opportunity of exercising their Parliamentary vote, as elections have been postponed till after the war, but they voted in the referendum on the sale of the Danish East Indies to the U.S.A., at the close of 1916. It is instructive to notice the bid made for women's support by all political parties, each of which in its programme now includes some scheme for women's advantage. Danish women, however, are not hurrying to identify themselves with political parties. They are carrying on active meetings for studying political questions, and are educating themselves to use their vote to the best advantage, and to support measures they approve irrespective of the party that promotes them.

Finland, the first European country to enfranchise women, and the only one in which women sit in Parliament, elected twenty-four women M.P.s in 1916.

Norway, where every woman has a vote, and where women are eligible to sit in Parliament, threw open the rank of Cabinet Minister to women in 1915. This move was appropriately initiated by the Minister of Justice! Women sit on the joint Scandinavian Commission, which is drawing up reformed marriage laws for Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. The women's societies formulate important and far-reaching proposals on the subject, and, as in two of the three countries they have the vote, their suggestions carry a weight which unenfranchised British women may well envy.

Women M.P.'s Elected by Men

The Netherlands is doing its best to catch up with Scandinavia, and the insuperable obstacle of the old Constitution has now been removed. In September, 1915, the project of amending the Constitution, dropped since the war, was revived. Dutch suffragists immediately demanded full equal voting rights with men, and presented a petition with over 160,000 signatures. The Government did not include actual woman suffrage in its Bill, but proposed to remove the constitutional obstacles to the introduction of woman suffrage. At the same time it proposed to make women eligible to sit in Parliament. In its explanatory memorandum the Government argued strongly for full woman suffrage, practically encouraging the introduction of a Woman Suffrage Bill, though unwilling to jeopardise the other reforms contained in its amended constitution by including women. This project has been passed, but before it can come into force there must be a general election, and it must pass again by a two-thirds majority in a joint session of both Houses. Then we may enjoy the quaint spectacle of women members of the Dutch Parliament, for whom only men may vote!

This brief survey of suffrage successes necessarily omits many events. The movement is going ahead so rapidly that an adequate account would fill much space. Enough has, however, been written to show what cause for encouragement suffragists have, and, as has been well said, though we may not win quickly, the other side cannot win at all.

Next London Meeting of the United Suffragists

A PUBLIC MEETING

WILL BE HELD IN THE

SMALL ESSEX HALL

(Essex Street, Strand, W.C.),

On Friday Evening, April 20, at 8 p.m.

SPEAKERS:

MRS. MAY WHITTY WEBSTER on "Franchise Prospects."

MR. LAURENCE HOUSMAN on "Things That Belong to Peace."

ADMISSION FREE—DISCUSSION INVITED.

BRING YOUR FRIENDS!

Full particulars and Handbills from the HON. SEC., UNITED SUFFRAGISTS, 27, Chancery Lane, W.C. 2.

UNITED SUFFRAGISTS

27, Chancery Lane, London, W.C. 2. Telephone, Holborn 5880

THE CAMPAIGN

Sunday, April 1; 3 p.m.—Open Air Meeting.—Hyde Park. Speakers: Mrs. Gregory, Miss Hodge.

Tuesday, April 3; 8 p.m.—Council Meeting.—U.S. Women's Club, 92, Borough Road, Southwark, S.E. Subject: "Welfare of the Club."

Sunday, April 15; 3 p.m.—Open Air Meeting.—Speakers: Miss Somers, Miss Wertheim.

Monday, April 16; 7.30 p.m.—Members' Business Meeting.—Corporation Chambers, Bolton.

Tuesday, April 17; 8 p.m.—Open Meeting.—U.S. Women's Club. Speaker: Miss Netta Syrett on "Flying."

FRIDAY, APRIL 20; 8 P.M.—U.S. PUBLIC MEETING.—SMALL ESSEX HALL, STRAND.—ADMISSION FREE. SPEAKERS: MRS. MAY WHITTY WEBSTER ON "FRANCHISE PROSPECTS"; MR. LAURENCE HOUSMAN ON "THINGS THAT BELONG TO PEACE."

Saturday, April 21; 3.30 p.m.—Drawing-room Meeting.—13, Temple Fortune Court, N.W. By kind invitation of Miss Newcomb and Miss Hodge. Speakers: Mrs. Pickett and Miss Evelyn Sharp.

Tuesday, April 24; 8 p.m.—Open Meeting.—U.S. Women's Club. Speaker: Mrs. Despard.

U.S. LONDON MEETINGS

An excellent audience assembled to listen to Lady Emily Lutyens, at the Essex Hall, on March 9, and her inspiring address on "Women's Task in the Coming Civilisation" caused the greatest interest, and roused an animated discussion. Mr. H. W. Nevinson, in the Chair, gave a good summary of the Franchise situation.

After we go to press, the last of this series of meetings will be held at the Essex Hall on March 30, when Mrs. Ayrton Gould will deal with the Suffrage situation, and Miss Alison Neilans will speak on "Perils of the Streets."

Next Series of Meetings

It has been decided to continue these U.S. London meetings in a further series after Easter.

On Friday evening, April 20, Mrs. May Whitty Webster will discuss "Franchise Prospects," and Mr. Laurence Housman will speak on the U.S. platform for the first time since he was elected a member of the Executive Committee. As he has been out of town all the winter Suffragists will welcome this opportunity of again hearing one of the most interesting speakers in the movement. The subject of his address will be "Things that Belong to Peace," and discussion will be invited afterwards.

Two meetings will be held in May, particulars of which will be given in the May number of VOTES FOR WOMEN (published in London on Thursday, April 26).

OPEN AIR CAMPAIGN

Organiser: Mrs. Gregory, 6, Gibson's Hill, Norwood, S.W.

Mrs. Gregory has very kindly consented to organise the open-air meetings in Hyde Park during the coming season, and the first meeting of the new series was held near the Reformer's Tree on Sunday, March 18, and was most successful. The day was fortunately fine, and a large crowd quickly collected and listened for more than an hour to speeches on the franchise situation by Mrs. Gregory and Miss Wertheim. The meetings are held fortnightly, and U.S. members will greatly help the organisers and speakers by coming to back up their efforts and by selling papers outside the Park gates. (See Campaign list for dates and time of meetings.)

U.S. WOMEN'S CLUB

92, Borough Road, S.E.

Secretary: Miss V. Aitken. Tel.: Hop 4172

The chief features of the month have been the Club concerts and meetings, all of which have been excellently attended, and warmly appreciated. We have to thank Miss Brown, Mr. Threadgold and Mrs. Whelen, for their very successful concerts; and Major Gillespie, Miss Evelyn Sharp, and Miss Underwood for their interesting addresses at the meetings. Thanks to Miss Young for gramophone records, and to Mrs. Haselden for 1s.

Club Council:—There will be a general meeting for members and helpers of the club, at the Club premises, on Tuesday, April 3, at 8 p.m., when all members and helpers are warmly invited to meet together "in Council," to discuss the welfare of the Club, and to offer any suggestions that may have occurred to them for its still greater efficiency and utility.

Jumble Sale:—There will be a Spring Jumble Sale shortly, contributions for which are urgently required. Parcels of clothing—in particular, boots, shoes, blouses and costumes—will be most welcome.

Refreshments:—Gifts of jam, sugar, bread, tea, "camp coffee" or cocoa, will be gladly received.

Flowers:—Will anyone send flowers for the Club?

ASHFORD U.S.

Hon. Sec.: Mr. John Marsh, 45, Royd's Road, Willsborough, Kent. Organizer: Miss Maude White, Magazine House, Winchelsea, Sussex

Very successful meetings have been held during the month. At the P.S.A., on March 18, Mrs. Despard spoke on "Ideal Brotherhood." It was noticed that although in a church the audience could scarcely suppress murmuring "hear, hear," to all that was said. At the evening U.S. Meeting the hall was filled to overflowing. Mrs. Cavendish Bentinck, who presided, impressed on her hearers that women must work for the reforms they needed as they had nearly got the Vote. Mrs. Despard gave a most inspiring speech, chiefly mentioning how very unsatisfactory the education, feeding, and condition of child life are, compared with what they would be if women had more power. Mr. Marsh and Mr. Roberts also spoke. Questions were asked at the close of the meeting and nine new members were made. The collection amounted to 13s. 0½d. We are very glad to welcome Mrs. Dell, and Mr. F. Tong, of the Trades and Labour Council, as Committee Members. Gratefully acknowledged:—

Mr. Herbert Lee, £1 6s.; Mrs. McCreath, 1s.; Mrs. Caister, 1s.; Mrs. Kitner, 1s.; Mrs. Lovell, 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. Jolly, 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, 1s.; Mrs. Barnes, 6d.

BOLTON U.S.

Hon. Sec.: Miss S. W. Holden, 110, Tottington Road, Harwood

On March 5, our veteran suffragist, Mr. Wm. Addison, delighted us by his treatment of "Imagination in Art" and drew forth a lively discussion on the value of imagination. Miss Collinge, from the chair, defended it as a desirable factor in education. Mr. Darbyshire dissented. It was decided to forego our monthly meeting on April 2 in favour of a meeting convened by the Women Textile Workers' Representation Society on Tuesday, April 3, in Borough Hall, when Miss McNeill will speak on "The Necessity for a Revolution in Education." Members, please attend. Subscriptions gratefully acknowledged: Mr. J. Geldard, 1s.; Mrs. Geldard, 1s.

GLASGOW U.S.

Hon. Sec. (pro tem.): Mrs. Macaulay, 44, Albert Drive, Crosshill

On March 13 and 14 the National Conference on Maternity and Child Welfare was held in Glasgow. Mrs. Kelsall went as a delegate from the Glasgow United Suffragists and made a report of the speeches which she afterwards read to the G.U.S. Committee, at a meeting held at 55, Bath Street, on Friday, March 16. The Conference was particularly interesting to Suffragists and must have impressed any that were there with the crying need there is for the women's point of view to be represented in legislation. There were 300 delegates present from all parts of England and Scotland, and the Lord Provost entertained them to lunch on March 13. It has been decided to hold a members' meeting at 55, Bath Street, on Monday, March 26. Mrs. Wallace (G.U.S.) will read a paper entitled "As We Sow," and tea will be served during the course of the evening.

KENSINGTON U.S.

Hon. Sec., Miss Postlethwaite, 47a, Earl's Court Road, W. 8. Telephone: 926 Western

Will anyone volunteer to take Miss Ward's place on the pitch and sell papers once or twice a month or sit in the shop while the Hon. Sec. goes out to sell? Jumble Sale contributions are always welcome at any time as there is a constant demand for second-hand things. In future the shop will be closed from 1 to 2 o'clock every day, and for the Easter holiday the shop will be closed from Wednesday evening, April 4, until Monday morning, April 16.

HAMPSTEAD AND GOLDER'S GREEN U.S.

Hon. Secretary: Miss Daisy Solomon, 64, Pattison Road, N.W.

By the kindness of Mrs. Binnie a pleasurable afternoon was spent on Saturday, March 3, when Miss Margaret Hodge gave us an entertaining address on "How Anti-Suffragists are made in our Nurseries," Miss Mary Thompson kindly took the chair. After tea we had some music, which greatly added to the enjoyment of the afternoon. Twenty copies of VOTES FOR WOMEN were sold, and the collection amounted to 16s. 6d. One new member was enrolled.

Our next meeting will be held by kind invitation of Miss Newcomb and Miss Hodge on Saturday afternoon, April 21, at 3.30 p.m. Miss Evelyn Sharp will be the speaker, and Mrs. Pickett will be in the Chair. The Report of the Annual Members' Meeting and the Public Meeting is held over until next month.

LIVERPOOL U.S.

Hon. Sec.: Miss Isabel Buxton, 111, Queen's Road

The annual meeting was held on 13th March, at Clarion Café. The Secretary's report and statement of accounts being adopted, the committee were re-elected *en bloc*, with the exception of Mr. Bernard, who wished to withdraw, and Dr. Ker, who was replaced by Miss Annie Marks as Vice-President. We are grateful that she has also volunteered to do the press work *pro tem.* The business was followed by an extremely interesting address by Mrs. Forrester, of Manchester, to whom our thanks are due. Will members and friends send us any suffrage books which they can spare to start a U.S. Library here?

U.S. IN NORWOOD

On March 8 Mr. Flewker kindly came to Mrs. Gregory's house (6, Gibson's Hill, Norwood) and spoke to a few working women of the neighbourhood on "How and Why I Became a Suffragist." His high tribute to women's ability was keenly appreciated. As a result of this meeting and a previous one on January 6, regular subscribers to the paper have been obtained. At a further garden meeting in May, Mrs. Gregory hopes there will be others anxious to take the paper every month; and she recommends this method of obtaining new readers to other members of the U.S.

[Hear, hear! Editor VOTES FOR WOMEN.]

HENDON WOMEN'S FRANCHISE SOCIETY (Affiliated to United Suffragists)

Hon. Sec.: Mrs. McCabe, 49, Bridge Lane, Hendon, N.W.

A most interesting meeting was held on Friday, March 9, when Mrs. Tiedeman, Sec. of the "Divorce Law Reform Union," gave an address on "The Iniquitous Separation System," showing that, though in some cases the system is unjust to men, in by far the larger number it is an abomination to women; and certainly as a remedy for unhappy marriages, it is much worse than useless, and a great blot on our legislation. A business meeting of members will be held on Friday evening, March 30, at 8, to arrange future work. Owing to Good Friday being the first Friday in April, Dr. Vickery will not hold her usual "At Home."

EASTER HOLIDAYS

The U.S. Offices at 27, Chancery Lane, will close on Wednesday evening, April 4, at 5 p.m. and reopen on Thursday morning, April 12, at 10 a.m. Letters will be dealt with during this time, but correspondents are requested to make these as few as possible and to confine them to matters of real importance.

The U.S. Women's Club will close on Thursday evening, April 5, at 9.45 p.m., and will reopen on Wednesday afternoon, April 11, at 3 p.m.

THE FUND

	£	s.	d.
Mrs. Almond.....	1	0	0
Anon.	25	0	0
,, ...	4	0	0
The Misses Barrowman	0	5	0
Miss N. B. Black	0	2	0
Miss M. Brady ...	0	1	0
Miss Gore Brown	1	0	0
Mrs. Sadd Brown	15	0	0
Miss M. B. Dodgson	0	10	0
Mrs. Farmer.....	0	5	0
Miss Cowper Fry	0	1	0
The Misses Horsfall	0	2	0
Mr. Laurence Housman	1	0	0
Mrs. Pethick Lawrence	18	0	0
Mrs. Macnab.....	0	10	0
Miss A. L. McNeill	1	1	0
Miss M. Mears...	0	8	0
Mr. F. Merrick...	1	4	0
Mrs. Morrison ...	1	0	0
Mrs. Roberts.....	0	5	0
Mrs F. Robertson	1	0	0
Miss Schirges ...	0	5	0
Miss Evelyn Sharp	1	1	0
Mrs. Baillie Weaver	2	0	0
Miss Wilkinson...	0	10	0
Total ...	70	5	0

CLUB FUND

	£	s.	d.
Mr. J. F. Bourne	1	0	0
Proceeds on Jumble Sale	4	17	4½
Mrs. Masters...	0	2	6
Mrs. Robertson	0	5	0
Per Mrs. Schutze (Proceeds of Concert)	13	11	6
The United Newspapers	0	2	6
Total	£19	18	10½

COMPARISON OF PUNISHMENTS

LIGHT SENTENCES

Overworking a Child

The *Manchester Guardian* (February 24) reports case of an engineer summoned before Mr. Horace Smith at Westminster Police Court for keeping his daughter, aged 13, at work after school hours on a lathe, often till 1 and 2 a.m. and once till 4 a.m. It was not a case of poverty.

Sentence: *Fined 40s. and 10s. 6d. costs.*

Cruelty to Animals

The *Manchester Guardian* (January 30) reports case of a butcher, charged at Southampton with cruelty to 20 pigs. He left them 40 hours in a railway truck without food or water, and becoming maddened they fought and maimed one another so badly that they had to be destroyed.

Sentence: *Fined £2 with costs.*

HEAVY SENTENCES

Stealing Potatoes

The *Times* (March 21) reports case of three women charged at Hitchin with stealing seed potatoes from sacks in fields. While the case was under adjournment two of the women offered to make reparation to the farmer by working on the land.

Sentence: *One month's hard labour.*

Burning a Stack

The *Times* (January 20) reports case of a sailor, charged at Carmarthenshire Assizes before Mr. Justice Bailhache with setting fire to a stack of barley worth £80. The Judge in passing sentence said this was not a time when we could stand the loss of stocks of food.

Sentence: *Five years' penal servitude.*

THE MAXIMUM SENTENCE

A study of the cases that are brought before judges and magistrates reveals, not only the tendency of administrators of the law to give lighter sentences for offences against the person than for sentences against property, but also, in some instances, the tendency of statutory laws to make it impossible for administrators to pass sentence on any other basis.

In the first of the two comparisons given in the table above, we are shocked at the smallness of the penalty imposed upon the man who had made a drudge of his little daughter, and without the justification of poverty as an excuse. But it appears from the newspaper account that the full penalty for keeping a child of school age at work after school hours is only forty shillings; therefore the magistrate had no other alternative than to impose this slight punishment. But it is difficult to see why the charge was not framed differently; for in effect cruelty was involved, and a case of cruelty could have been sent to a higher court and dealt with more stringently.

We do not mean to infer from this, of course, that the maximum sentence was given to the three women who were sent to hard labour for a month for stealing seed potatoes. Judged by the preposterous sentences given for theft in many courts, theirs was a comparatively lenient one. But, compared with a paltry fine of 40s. where a child's person was in question, and poverty was not, a month's hard labour for women who were willing to work on the land, but had yielded to an almost overwhelming temptation (in these days of potato scarcity), becomes both excessive and inexpedient. In equity the two sentences should have been reversed.

Incidentally, it is interesting to note that while a man may ill-treat his daughter for 40s., he is liable to penal servitude for life for wearing a military uniform without authority!

FOOD OR FOOD VALUE?

It is difficult, in these days of high prices and scarcity of food, to quarrel with a Judge who justifies the imposition of a severe sentence for rick-burning by emphasizing the wantonness of destroying "stocks of food"—as in the second case in the right-hand column of our table of comparisons. But we cannot refrain from remarking that five years' penal servitude is an excessive sentence, even viewed from this standpoint; also, that we seem to remember similar long sentences for similar rick-burning long before the war caused a scarcity of food.

Further, our suspicions are aroused on comparing this particular case of rick-burning with the case of cruelty to 20 pigs, resulting in their ultimate destruction. In both cases, "stocks of food" are destroyed. Yet the butcher was only fined lightly for bringing about this result, after causing horrible suffering to the animals concerned. One cannot help wondering if the instinct to protect the farmer's property was not more responsible (though perhaps unconsciously so) for the heavy sentence passed on the sailor than a sense of the need (which of course we do not deny) to protect the people's food.

WOMAN AND DRINK

In spite of repeated statements to the contrary, the assertion that women are drinking more than they did before the war has continued to be made, though with what object it is difficult to say. But the latest statistics really ought to kill this slander, once and for all. According to the police returns, the convictions for drunkenness in the large towns of Great Britain during the past four years show a reduction of more than half. Between 1914 and 1915 the number of female convictions dropped by some 2,600, and between 1915 and 1916 they fell by nearly 14,000. As the *Times* (March 10) says, this decrease is far too heavy "to be explained away by any hypothesis but that fewer women have been drunk in the streets." The same paper comments thus:—"The figures relating to women are of special interest in view of the current statement that drinking and drunkenness have increased among women."

THEFT AND THE CINEMA

During March a good deal of evidence was given before the Cinema Commission with reference to the question of film influence on the juvenile mind. It is satisfactory to find that witnesses, who might be supposed to know what they were talking about, seemed to think that the harm done to children by the "pictures" has been greatly exaggerated. Mr. Cecil Leeson, Secretary of the Howard Association, strongly inclined to the view that the cinema had carried blame which ought to fall elsewhere.

"Steal Because Their Lives are Dull"

In his opinion, the fascination of the cinema was an indictment of the child's dull home conditions. Some of them stole, and it was surprising that so few of them did. It would possibly be found, if the charge were investigated, that the great majority of those who stole, did so because their lives were dull. The pictures were the one bright spot in their drab lives.

Three schoolgirls, who gave evidence, said they did not like love stories on the film, but preferred cowboy and Red Indian pictures. One little girl witness said she did not go to the cinema as she found it "injurious to the eyes." If she was not "pulling the leg" of her interrogators, one is inclined to think that the child who will do anything to get to the "pictures" is less likely to come to harm in the end than the proper little person who thinks of her health first!

FROM THE PRESS

The Observer (March 25)

We have some reason for saying that no condemnation could be too stern for any attempt to embarrass the Prime Minister in the interests of any reactionary views which may be held by the smaller portion of the Unionist Party in Parliament. If the Premier has to take a risk in connection with any such issue of domestic politics, as even the war will not allow to sleep, he must take that risk on the side of democracy and progress. In that case we venture to assure him that the mass of the Unionist Party in the country will give him their hearty sympathy and their determined support to an extent that will clear the political air. . . . . .

Some reluctant Unionists still object to what approaches manhood suffrage and yet more to a very wide measure of woman's suffrage. The answer is overwhelming. How can the citizen's vote be refused to any class of adults who are passionately called upon every day by the very Unionists we have indicated to do the utmost measure of citizen's work? Never could the State have been saved by its present enfranchised members. It has been saved by calling up its unenfranchised reserves. Above all, there would have been no chance for the national cause had it not been for the work of women. Mr. Lloyd George is the last man to repudiate the cause to which Mr. Asquith, like ourselves and like hosts of Liberals and Unionists alike throughout the country, is now converted. It is a puerile illusion to suppose that questions of this magnitude, after all that has happened, could be burked by forcing a machine-made election, not taken on such a plain and urgent war issue as alone would justify an appeal even on an obsolete register.

It is useless to talk of amending the present register in order to give votes only to soldiers and sailors. We are heart and soul for that object, but no Bill confined to that object would have the slightest chance of passing in the present House of Commons. Munition workers, for instance, whether men or women, have a stronger patriotic title to vote than many less essential civilians who are at present on the register.

Daily News (March 26)

It is too late in the day for this question of woman's citizenship to be raised again as a disputable issue. Whatever reality there was in the opposition in other days it has disappeared with the experience of the past two years. We ourselves should be the last to base woman's claim to the rights of citizenship on her services during the war. It belongs to her as one who has an equal share in the burdens, responsibilities, and restraints of an organised society. But at any rate her claim has been strengthened in these days beyond challenge even from those who have opposed that claim in the past on the infantile ground that women can have no part in the defence of the country. In modern war the service of women is found to be as necessary and as immediate as that of men. . . . . We cannot waste our time mumbling dry bones and holding the gates of privilege and property against the unchallengeable claims of equal citizenship. We need a new machine for a new work. The Speaker's Committee has fashioned that machine for us. It is for the Government to carry out its instructions in their integrity.

The Nation (March 17)

Democracy for us means representative Government, and the only way to recover it is to recover for Parliament its authority with its representative character. . . . . Women must be voters before the tasks of industrial and social reconstruction are attempted. . . . The Speaker's scheme is not an ideal charter of reform, but it is a model compromise. Nothing but a compromise can be adopted to-day, and to refuse reform to-day is to refuse it for some years. . . . . Save in the matter of the impossible age limit for women electors, the scheme should be adopted as it stands.

The Nation (March 24)

We must now re-don our discarded dress of democracy if only to escape open shame in the eyes of free Russia. A Reform Bill is now almost certain.

Daily Telegraph (March 10)

The best of compromises, though it may be approved by the general common sense, is not a thing that kindles an enduring fervour in human bosoms; it cannot be upheld as a banner and fought for over a long period of time. If not acted upon promptly, it is only too likely to be quietly shelved, and the matter in question to go on in the old deplorable rut. Why is that danger being incurred? . . . . There can be but one end to the business. Are we to have it now and have done with it? Or are the forces of Conservatism in the State to go on fighting a rearguard action for years to come in a hopeless cause, wasting an energy that ought to be devoted to the immense tasks of national and Imperial reconstruction which the country has to face after the war? . . . . It is by this time fairly plain that a measure of woman suffrage must be included in any reform legislation that is seriously meant.

Manchester Guardian (March 8)

Lord Curzon rightly said that the recommendations of the Conference "could not be ignored lightly." Far from that, they constitute the weightiest and most impartial pronouncement perhaps ever delivered by a body of men representing different political parties and widely differing political opinions on a series of highly important and controversial questions, and to ignore them—not to give effect to them—would be to waste a precious opportunity and to prove that either the House of Commons or the Government, to which the House of Commons looks for guidance, had fallen far below the level of its duty and its reputation. We look for much better things.

WOMEN AS OLD AGE PENSION OFFICERS

A Memorial from the Women's Local Government Society, signed by influential and representative women, was recently presented to the Prime Minister, praying for the appointment of women, as well as men, as Old Age Pension officers. The memorialists point out that women would be specially useful in this capacity, "seeing that inquiries have often to be made into domestic and family circumstances which require delicate handling, that the cost of food and lodging has to be estimated, and that in some cases infirm and bedridden women have to be visited."

"If only for attaining greater speed in the relief of the suffering poor," concludes the Memorial, women should be thus appointed, but—it is careful to mention—on the same scale of payment as in the case of men officers.

MORAL AND SOCIAL HYGIENE

We are informed by the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene (19, Tothill Street, S.W. 1) that although the worst features of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, 1917, still under discussion, have been removed, there is another aspect of the fight against venereal disease which must receive attention and careful scrutiny. Briefly, there is an agitation now on foot to work for the prevention of venereal disease through measures of medical prophylaxis which may possibly have the effect of lowering the moral standard and lessening the sense of personal responsibility.

A Public Meeting

After we go to press, on Friday, March 30, at 4 p.m., the Association will hold a public meeting in the Caxton Hall, Westminster, at which these proposals will be discussed, and other and preferable lines of action put forward. The speakers are Dr. Jane Walker, Mrs. Philip Snowden and Dr. Charles Macalister of Liverpool.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

ASSOCIATION FOR MORAL AND SOCIAL HYGIENE.—We must not rest on our oars. The worst features of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill are defeated—we must now examine the new medical proposals for the prevention of venereal disease. (Vide Correspondence Brit. Med. Journal.) These will be considered at the Annual Meeting of the above Association, on Friday, March 30th, at Caxton Hall, Westminster, at 4 p.m. Subject: "The Moral Prevention of Venereal Disease." Speakers: Dr. Jane Walker, Mrs. Philip Snowden and Dr. Charles Macalister, F.R.C.P. (of Liverpool). Tickets from the Secretary, 19, Tothill Street, S.W. 1.

THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE will resume their Wednesday afternoon meetings at 3 p.m. at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, on April 18th, when Mr. Holford Knight will speak on the Legal Profession.

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